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Did Police Learn Burglary From CIA At Camp Peary?

THE CENTRAL Intelligence Agency has released documents revealing that a CIA-run training program for domestic police departments included courses in safecracking, burglary, and concealment of surreptitious entries and bugging operations.

The CIA documents, released under a Freedom of Information request by The Washington Star, confirm in detail a police training program linked to the agency's Camp Peary facility in 1973. The training program itself, without the latest revelations, led congressional critics at that time to charge that the CIA had violated federal law.

Several plausible reasons have been cited as to why the CIA and local police joined together, although both the agency and police departments have been tight-lipped about it. One CIA document quoted by the Star spoke of the need of Washington area police for CIA help "to combat the tangible threats posed by radical terrorist groups within their jurisdiction."

But on the other hand, investigations by the Rockefeller Commission and congressional committees have turned up several examples where the CIA used local police as "cover" for CIA security or counterintelligence operations.

Three independent sources told The Virginia Gazette in 1973 that Camp Peary had been used for training officers from at least 13 metropolitan police departments. Other sites used in the training were the CIA's Langley headquarters and a then-unknown CIA base in North Carolina, now known to be Harvey's Point.

Although specific locations and names were deleted by the CIA from the 189 documents released to the Star, the newspaper did identify Camp Peary as the site for a meeting of domestic police chiefs in 1967. The heads of several police departments in the metropolitan Washington area, New York City, Boston and Chicago attended, according to the Star.

In addition, the Rockefeller Commission reported in passing last summer that an unnamed "CIA training facility in southern Virginia" was used for weekends of "relaxation and entertainment" by police officials friendly to the CIA. This description parallels one of the functions of Camp Peary given by numerous sources to the Gazette, specifically the use of the 10,000-acre base as a country club for agency executives and friends.

The CIA assistance and training program is believed to have ended in March 1973 following a congressional investigation of the agency's links to local police. Then-CIA director Richard Helms testified before Congress in 1973 that his agency was authorized to assist police under the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. (Unresolved is a Rockefeller Commission finding that CIA aid to police began in 1966.)

Still unclear is which specific courses were taught at Camp Peary and which were taught at other CIA bases. A CIA spokesman told the Gazette Tuesday that deletions to the police documents were made "in accordance with the law of the United States." The spokesman declined further comment.

The CIA documents further add to a growing picture of rapport between the CIA and police agencies in many U.S. cities during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Star noted that assistance went to the Virginia State Police and Maryland State Police as well as local departments.

As a result of revelations in 1973 that the CIA had trained police officers, Congress amended the National Security Act specifically to prohibit local police from receiving CIA training. The 1947 National Security Act, known as the CIA's charter, forbids the agency from any "internal security functions." Critics of the police training program said it violated this law.

—ED OFFLEY